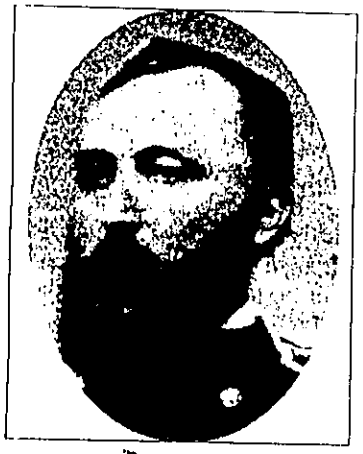

iting in the subsequent Seven Days' Bat-
. At Gaines' Mill, the regiment's colonel
s killed, leaving Sweitzer in charge. Later
he day, Sweitzer himself led an advance
allantly," according to brigade leader
. Gen. Charles Griffin), and was badly
nded and left on the field. For this
on, he was promoted to colonel during
convalescence.

veitzer was back in field command of the
d by Antietam in September 1862,
ough the Fifth Corps was held in reserve
ng the battle. When Griffin was promot-
o division command at the end of Octo-
Sweitzer was given command of the
ade. At Fredericksburg, Sweitzer led his
ade in the division's doomed afternoon
ult on Marye's Heights, where it lost 222
. Sweitzer was replaced in brigade com-
d before Chancellorsville when its senior
nel, James McQuade, returned. When
Quade got too sick to continue in com-
d during the battle, Sweitzer once again
charge, though the brigade was not
r fire after this transfer of command.
is difficult to conclude that Jacob
tzer possessed, with such scant creden-
the ability or experience to lead a
de.

TTYSBURG: Sweitzer's men started
1 in Union Mills, Maryland, and
hed north toward Gettysburg all day
the bulk of the Fifth Corps. The divi-
arrived and massed briefly on Brinker-
Ridge about two miles east of Gettys-
at mid-morning on July 2, and one of Sweitzer's regiments skirmished there with the enemy. The corps soon moved on, and Sweitzer and his tired infantrymen crossed Rock Creek bridge on the Baltimore Pike around 11:00 a.m. After a brief respite at the base of Power's Hill, the division was sent down the Granite Schoolhouse Lane and the Taneytown Road to a point near the Union left flank.

When Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's Corps roared across the Emmitsburg Road toward Devil's Den and Stony Hill about 4:30 p.m., Fifth Corps commander Maj. Gen. George Sykes marched Sweitzer's brigade, together with Col. William Tilton's brigade, on Sweitzer's right, to the Stony Hill position. There, his men were to occupy the hillock and bolster Sickles' threatened Third Corps line, in essence the middle of Maj. Gen. David Birney's divisional front, which covered the ground from the Peach Orchard on the right to Devil's Den on the left. Sweitzer was unsure of the exact whereabouts of Col. P. Regis de Trobriand's brigade, one of Birney's units he was to assist, and supposed it was aligned to his left. Sweitzer had but three regiments with him at Gettysburg: the 4th Michigan on the right, the 62nd Pennsylvania in the center, and 32nd Massachusetts on the left, slightly more than 1,000 men and officers. These men held the north end of the woods fronting west toward the Peach Orchard.

When Longstreet's attack reached the Stony Hill sector, Sweitzer shifted his regiments as needed and generally conducted himself well. Division commander James Barnes and Colonel Tilton, however, grew overly concerned about a gap that existed between Tilton's line and the Peach Orchard. Barnes sent word to Sweitzer that when he retreated, he should do so through the woods. Sweitzer notified his regimental commanders, and some confusion ensued as to whether a retreat had actually been ordered. A short while later, while Joseph Kershaw's South Carolinians were pounding Tilton's right front and threatening his flank, Sweitzer watched as his fellow colonel retreated his regiments about 300 yards north beyond the Wheatfield Road and into the Trostle Woods. Barnes soon after ordered Sweitzer to do likewise, since Tilton's withdrawal exposed Sweitzer's right. The long bearded and grim-faced Sweitzer conducted his retreat in good order and aligned his men in the woods along the Wheatfield Road.

After Barnes' troops fell back, assistance from the Second Corps arrived in the form of John Caldwell's division, which formed in the Trostle Woods west of Sweitzer and launched a sweeping attack into the Wheatfield. When Caldwell's division ran into trouble, Sweitzer's brigade advanced to support it. His front, about 300 yards long, moved forward toward the stone wall at the far end of the field. Once past the Stony Hill on his right, fire from that direction prompted him to change front with two regiments to face it. As he faced Kershaw's South Carolinians, elements from two other Confederate brigades pressed in against his center and left, and the small brigade was bent back into a wide V-shaped front, nearly surrounded. Hand-to-hand fighting broke out. It was here that the famous fight for the 4th Michigan's national colors took place, and its colonel, Harrison Jeffords, was bayonetted. Sweitzer's horse was killed under him as he directed the action and a bullet went through his hat. Almost surrounded, his regiments began falling back under the pressure and were forced off the field. Sweitzer had dutifully sent his regiments in twice that afternoon and had made the best of two difficult situations without much direction from above. His efforts cost him more than 400 men, and the brigade would not be fit for further action for the rest of the battle.

Jacob Sweitzer had done well at Gettysburg, especially considering his paucity of experience at that level. General Barnes included Sweitzer in his omnibus praise of his brigadiers after the battle. Sweitzer managed to avoid the mini-controversy that spilled through the army about the Barnes-Tilton performance on Stony Hill. His brigade was considered in good hands after Gettysburg, and Sweitzer continued to lead his veteran regiments until both he and they were mustered out a year later, in July 1864. Despite his showing at Gettysburg, he never received a promotion to brigadier general. Sweitzer died in 1888.

For further reading:

Pfanz, Harry. *Gettysburg: The Second Day.* Chapel Hill, 1987.

Powell, William H. *The Fifth Army Corps.* New York, 1896.

Reese, Timothy J. *Sykes' Regular Infantry Division, 1861-1864.* McFarland, 1990.

Third Brigade

(1,336 men)

Colonel Strong Vincent

As he watched his brigade march through a small Pennsylvania town toward its destiny at Gettysburg, twenty-six-year-old Strong Vincent declared to an aide, "There could be worse fates than to die fighting here in Pennsylvania." Vincent, true to his first name, was of average

match, and had been marked early on as one of the most valuable young officers in the army. Though he had not been trained as a soldier, his assets were many. He was a fine horseman, and struck a very military appearance in the saddle. (His young wife, also a skilled equestrienne, had visited him on the Rappahannock and their long horseback rides, their gaiety, and their striking good looks, had inspired much admiration in the army.) He was personally quiet and gentlemanly, and had a cheerful disposition, but was also a strict disciplinarian. Vincent's regiment, the 83rd Pennsylvania, had been so precise and proficient in drill that on the Peninsula in 1862 army commander Maj. Gen. George McClellan had lauded it as "one of the best regiments in the army."

Born in Waterford, Pennsylvania, to a successful merchant, Vincent toiled for a time in his father's iron foundry in Erie. Convinced that he could further his future in the foundry business with a scientific education, he enrolled in Scientific School in Hartford, Connecticut, transferred to Trinity College in the same city, then finally ended up at Harvard University, where he abandoned his original plans and devoted himself to the study of law. His fine character became evident at this point in his life, for he was a respected figure at Harvard, being elected president of at least one student society and also designated marshal at Class Day ceremonies upon graduation. He was admitted to the Erie County Bar the year before the Civil War began.

After the fall of Fort Sumter, Vincent enlisted in the ninety-day Erie Regiment, and rose from private to regimental adjutant during the regiment's three-month existence. Reenlisting in the 83rd Pennsylvania, he was commissioned lieutenant colonel. The regiment served during the Peninsula Campaign, but Vincent contracted malaria and missed most of the action. The 83rd's colonel was killed at Gaines' Mill, and while Vincent was home recuperating from his disease, the rank and file elected him to be their new commander.

The young colonel returned to the regiment in October 1862, and fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg. At one point during this engagement, his men became pinned down by shellfire, and to help keep up their courage, Vincent calmly strode among his prostrate ranks, oblivious to the deadly projectiles exploding about him. In March 1863, Vincent turned down an opportunity to become the judge advocate general of the Army of the Potomac; a post offered him after his fine performance as a juror in a court-martial. He refused the appointment with a laugh, saying, "I enlisted to fight." Following Chancellorsville, where the brigade was not engaged, Colonel Vincent received command of the brigade on May 20 to "the cheers that broke through the solemn decorum of dress parade."

Thus one of the most celebrated brigadiers of Gettysburg lore was called to battle on his native soil with only five weeks of experience at the head of his unit. Vincent's natural gifts were such that few had any doubts but that he would do well. After a successful performance at one of the early skirmishes in the Campaign, Maj. Gen. George Meade—then still in command of the Fifth Corps—was heard to say, "I wish he were a brigadier general, I'd put him in charge of a division."

GETTYSBURG: After arriving on the battlefield on the morning of July 2, Vincent and his men led Brig. Gen. James Barnes' division to the Union left near Little Round Top in the afternoon, arriving just as Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's attack began driving toward the area about 4:30 p.m. Vincent was in reserve near the Wheatfield with his brigade when he spotted a courier sent by Fifth Corps commander Maj. Gen. George Sykes to deliver orders to Barnes. Hailing the messenger, Vincent learned that Sykes wanted a brigade to occupy "that hill yonder" as soon as possible. Vincent quickly recognized the strategic importance of the rocky eminence, and risked court-martial by ordering his brigade to advance at the double-quick for Little Round Top.

As shells burst in his ranks, Vincent rapidly and expertly deployed his regiments to defend the high ground just minutes ahead of Brig. Gens. Jerome Robertson's Texans and Brig. Gen. Evander Law's Alabamians. The young colonel deployed his four regiments part way down the rocky slope in a crescent front facing generally southwest, toward Devil's Den. His regiments were aligned, from right to left, as follows: 16th Michigan, 44th New York, 83rd Pennsylvania, and 20th Maine (the army's far left).

For the next hour and a half, Vincent's men fought with grit and determination, denying Little Round Top to the Southerners, who doggedly continued to fight their way up its steep slopes a few inches at a time. The attack against his left flank (held by the 20th Maine and Col. Joshua Chamberlain) by Evander Law's Alabamians is well documented.

At the climax of the attack, Vincent rushed forward to cheer on his men and fell mortally wounded by a bullet that passed through his left groin and fractured the thigh bone. He was taken to the rear, and as his condition worsened in the following days, messages were sent to Washington urging Vincent's promotion to brigadier general. For once, the wheels of the military bureaucracy moved quickly, and Vincent received his star shortly before he expired on July 7.

Vincent's bugler wrote:

General Vincent by his soldierly comprehension of the situation, and the promptness of his action, saved to our army the field of Gettysburg that day. . . .Had he hesitated a moment, or waited for orders to reach him through the ordinary channels, when his brigade arrived on [Little] Round Top he would have found it already in possession of the enemy.

For further reading:

Norton, Oliver W. *The Attack and Defense of Little Round Top, Gettysburg, July 2, 1863.* Chicago, 1909.

Pfanz, Harry. *Gettysburg: The Second Day.* Chapel Hill, 1987.

Powell, William H. *The Fifth Army Corps.* New York, 1896.

Wright, James R. "Vincent's Brigade on Little Round Top." *Gettysburg Magazine,* #1, 1989.

Second Division
The "Regular Division"
(4,013 men)

Brigadier General Romeyn Beck Ayres

Romeyn Ayres was a career army offi competent professional at the head o only division of professional soldiers i Army of the Potomac. Six feet tall, he grown portly and was balding, so as to l him with a topknot—though he had shortage of facial hair. Ayres sported a sive, wiry beard and spiked mustache nearly hid his mouth and ears and made look older than his thirty-eight years. high forehead and philosophical imparted the air of an intellectual, whil size helped him assert an authoritative p ical presence. He was a very social ma the best sense of the word, considerat others and capable of having fun with sacrificing his dignity. He had meticul personal habits and was an immacu dresser. Despite his cultivated demea Ayres had acquired the reputation of a s born fighter who quickly let his men k that they could expect to be driven hard.

Ayres was born along the Mohawk R in upstate New York, the son of a sm town doctor who groomed